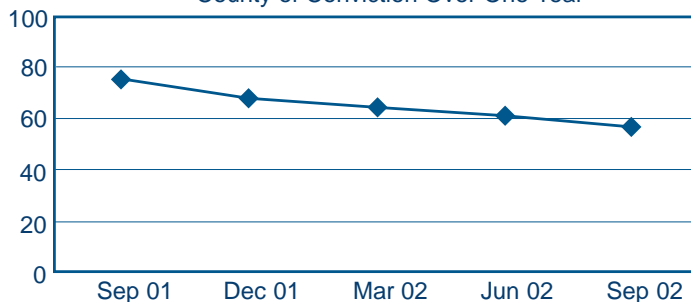## THE SHELL GAME

BY KERI-ANNE JETZER

Remember the old shell game, where you have three shells in front of you with a marble hidden under one of them? The dealer would show you which shell had the marble, then shuffle the shells and make you guess to where the marble had been moved. That is about how tricky it is to determine where an offender is after being released to the community.

Over the short time that I've been with Planning and Research, I know that we have received many requests for prison release data. If the offenders in question have already been released, we can type up one of our crazy statistical programs and, generally, pull the data rather easily. There is a specific data element that tells what county or out of state location the offender released to. It is when the requestor is looking to find out where the offenders *will* be releasing to that things get sticky. The data that we use only allows us to know an offender's release location *after* the release occurs. As a way to get around this, many people ask us, instead, for the county of conviction of the offenders in question. They think the county is a good indicator as to where the offender will release to or be supervised in; however this does not work very well and I will explain why.

I looked at a sample of offenders who released in September 2001 and found that, of the offenders who released from prison that month, only 66 percent of them released to the county in which they were convicted. Then, I reviewed all prison releases in fiscal year 2002 and found the average to be 69 percent.

Next, I looked at all offenders, those with jail and prison sentences alike, who started community custody in September 2001. I tracked their county of supervision for one year. Less than 80 percent of offenders start off being supervised in their county of conviction. The chart below shows the percentage of offenders who remain under supervision in the same county where they received their conviction. After three months, the percentage drops to under 70 percent and, after a year, it falls to less than 60 percent.

Percentage of Offenders Being Supervised in Their County of Conviction Over One Year

This data shows the migratory nature of our offenders. It is this migratory nature that weakens the relationship between an offender's county of

conviction, county of release, and county of supervision. The percentage shifts that occur from month to month may not mirror the data I have provided, but, to quote Led Zepplin, "the song remains the same."

Planning and Research works mostly with data on events that have occurred; an offender *has* released, a program *was* started/completed, an offender *was* moved to another location. We are not able to predict the future, but we can certainly tell you what past trends have occurred. It is through such past trends that I am able to show you, now, that it is not so easy to tell which shell holds the marble.

DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF JANUARY 31, 2003

INMATE POPULATION	**16,315**
Prisons	15,181
Pre-Release	515
Work Release	619
COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION	
ACTIVE SUPERVISION	64,449
Community Custody	21,087
Supervision/PRS	6,256
County Confinement	2,991
Monetary Only	27,478
Misdemeanor	4,124
Other	2,513
INACTIVE STATUS	28,537

ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY03

	Date	Type	Return
1. WCCW (min)	07/02/02	Offsite Crew	09/07/02
2. CRCC	08/01/02	Facility	08/06/02
3. CRCC	08/01/02	Facility	NA
4. AHCC	09/24/02	Offsite Crew	09/24/02
5. CCCC	01/29/02	Work Crew	NA